

There will always be some areas of profound disagreement. What I would ask you today to do is to, as I said, to pray for us as we go forward, to be willing to engage in this dialog, to reach out to others who may disagree with us on particular issues and bring them into the family of America, and to give us a chance to find common ground so that we can build a common good and do what all of us in our own way are required to do. For I believe that each of us has a ministry in some way that we must play out in life and with a certain humility but also with deep determination.

So I thank you for being here. This has been a wonderful morning for me and for all of us. And I ask you to think about these things and to be willing to continue to engage in this dialog. We have a lot of work to do to lift this country up and to pull this country together and to push this country into the 21st century. And we have serious responsibilities beyond our borders. Every day there is some good news in the press about that. Some of you have been talking about the Middle East. How many times have we thought we had good news and been disappointed?, but better than the bad. And every day there is some frustration. So we have to go forward with a much deeper sense of shared values and togetherness toward the common good than we've had so far. That is what I seek to do and what I ask for your prayers and guidance and support and involvement, active involvement, to achieve.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting on Flood Relief and Hurricane Emily *August 30, 1993*

The President. Let me say, I asked that James Lee Witt to come in this morning to provide to me and to the Vice President and to our senior staff a briefing on Hurricane Emily and what provisions we're making to be ready for that and as well as to give me an update the—how we're handling the aftermath of the flood damage in the Mid-

west. And as you know, there was more flooding in Iowa yesterday.

So those are the two things we're going to be talking about, and I thought I would maybe just let Mr. Witt say a word or two and then you may have a couple of questions.

[At this point, Director Witt gave a briefing on Hurricane Emily and stated that FEMA was prepared for the storm.]

Middle East Peace Talks

Q. Mr. President, changing the subject for a second. The Palestinians and the Israelis appear to have some historic breakthrough involving perhaps mutual Israeli-PLO recognition. If the Israelis and the PLO recognize each other, will that result in the U.S. resuming its dialog with the PLO?

The President. Well, first, let me say I am very much encouraged by what is happening there and very hopeful. The administration has worked hard to facilitate it. But ultimately, whatever happens will have to be done by the parties themselves. If there is a new and different landscape in the Middle East, then I might be willing to entertain some questions. But I can't say now. I can't answer your question now. It's hypothetical, and it would only interfere with the discussions now going on. I don't think it's appropriate for the United States even to consider its own position here until the parties have a chance to work out a resolution of this.

Q. But the U.S. did have intervention in this, didn't it? I mean——

The President. Oh, absolutely. I don't know if I would call it an intervention, but we've certainly worked hard to be a handmaiden or whatever the appropriate term is——

Q. So you are involved?

The President. We are involved, but our position has not been at issue here and should not be discussed until the parties themselves worked out their differences.

NAFTA

Q. Mr. President, Senator Dole suggested the prospects for NAFTA would be better were you to take it up to the Senate first. Do you agree?

The President. Yes, I think I do. At least my preliminary—I haven't talked to Mr. Daley about this or to the congressional leadership. But if you mean by that there's a far greater likelihood that today that NAFTA would pass in the Senate than the House, that's clearly correct.

Q. What's going to be your strategy for winning over the House Democrats? David Bonior says that 75 percent of them right now are against NAFTA.

The President. Well, not all of them have reached a position on it. And I want to do two or three things. First of all, as I told the Governors when I met with them in Tulsa, I'd like for all the Governors who support this to ask their Members of Congress to take no position until they actually read the agreement and see the implementing legislation itself.

Remember, my position, going back to 1992, was that I was not for the NAFTA agreement as originally concluded but that I would support it if certain conditions were met. Those conditions have been met as far as our agreements with the Mexicans. We still have to have a training program, but we're going to have the first trade agreement in history that's got strong environmental requirements and that has Mexico committing to raise its minimum wage as its economy grows.

So these are very encouraging and very different things. So my strategy for Democrats and Republicans who have not declared for but have not adamantly planted their feet in cement against, would be to ask them to read the agreement and wait until they see the implementing legislation, because that will tell them where we're going with the job training, and then make a judgment. And I think if that happens, we can prevail because, again I will say, Latin America is the second fastest growing part of the world. Mexico is just the beginning of this process. And I think it means more jobs for Americans. And I think I'll be able to persuade——

Q. Should Bonior remove his hat as your whip, and——

The President. No. I think that's a decision that the leadership in the House has to make. You know, Presidents and their Members of Congress are going to differ on some

things. I heard the other day—I don't know that this is true—but I heard that so far, the Democrats in the Congress have voted for me more consistently than the last two or three Democratic Presidents. I have not checked that. That's just what I heard.

Q. You don't believe that, do you?

The President. I think yes, I think they have with remarkable consistency and very high percentages. But I think that we have an honest disagreement here. He has worked his heart out for me. This is the first issue on which we have disagreed. I think he's wrong; he thinks I'm wrong. I think in the end that my position will prevail.

Hurricane Emily

Q. I want to get this question—the people in the Carolinas are remembering still in their mind not only the devastation, of course, but the response of the Federal Government after—that they consider that largely a nightmare as well. What do you say to them to let them know that you're prepared, well prepared, in case it does, of course, hit them?

The President. I would say two things. First of all, we're here looking at this map today trying to get ready. That's what we're doing here. And secondly, if you look at the way FEMA and the Agriculture Department and the other Departments handled the flooding in the Middle West, it's obvious that while we don't control what Mother Nature does, we're going to be on top of it with all the resources and effort that we can possibly marshal as quickly as possible.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to William M. Daley, Chairman, NAFTA Task Force. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Following Discussions With Caribbean Leaders

August 30, 1993

President Clinton. Good afternoon. Today I had the great honor of welcoming five outstanding leaders from the English-